

**CENTER FOR  
STRATEGIC AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CSIS)**

**U.S. STRATEGY IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN**

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RICK BARTON: Good afternoon. I'm Rick Barton, the co-director of the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project with Karin von Hippel, who's back here, and on behalf of our president, John Hamre, and my colleagues here, it's a great pleasure to welcome all of you here today, and in particular to welcome back our colleague, Michèle Flournoy. She was a terrific person to work with when she was here, and we know that her colleagues at the Defense Department and in the new administration are finding the experience to be equally enjoyable, as we did.

Michèle co-chaired the Afghanistan-Pakistan Interagency Policy Review with Ambassador Richard Holbrooke and Bruce Reidel, and today she is going to be discussing that review process, what has and hasn't worked in our strategy and then looking ahead at some of the remaining challenges, including how to measure progress.

Michèle, many of your former CSIS colleagues are here today, who have been working on these same issues, and I thought if they're – if I can just get them to wave their hands as well. Tezi Schaefer, who's worked on this for many years, Tony Cordesman, part of his office. That's a younger Tony. (Laughter.) Arnaud de Borchgrave and Tom Sanderson, Craig Cohen, Gerry Hyman, Ray DuBois and of course Karin. So – and there are many others who have been involved with this as well. We're all eager to hear what you have to say, we stand ready to help you whenever we can, and we'll look forward to your calling on us.

For those of you who have friends who couldn't make it today, this will be podcast and also videocast within a few hours, so those – so others can see this. And I would ask you that when we get to the question-and-answer period, which Michèle and I will do from the table, to just please identify yourselves and to make sure that your questions have a point that's made within one minute. (Laughter.) And if you would, at the very end, since Michèle has to go onto another appointment, just stay seated and give her the chance to leave as quickly as possible, that would also be helpful.

So Michèle, it's a great, great, great pleasure to have you here today, and thanks for joining us.

(Applause.)

MICHÈLE FLOURNOY: Well, it's wonderful to be back at CSIS, where I spent a good number of years, and particularly to be hosted by the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project, which many of you may not know. I wrote the first grant application for the project, way back when, and I'd like to take credit for having a hand in hiring Rick Barton, and so forth. And I want to thank Karin, his co-conspirator, as well, for hosting me today.

I wanted to take some – a few minutes up front to tell you about the review that we've just completed in the Obama administration on Afghanistan and Pakistan strategy. It's a review that I co-chaired along with Bruce Reidel and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke. It is very much

the beginning of a process, as opposed to the end. I want to say a few words about how we went about the review, share with you some of our key conclusions and then address the very challenging phase that we're in now, which is working to develop a detailed plan to actually implement the review strategy to and to make what we hope will be real progress on the ground, in the theater.

Right now, we're working to fine-tune that plan, and we've – and to come up with appropriate ways to actually measure our progress. You've all heard the military aphorism that no battle plan survives contact with the enemy. Well, we should keep in mind that no plan of any kind survives contact with reality and that we will need to remain flexible. As circumstances change, we're going to have to change and adapt with them, and we have to be smart about this.

We also can't do this alone. This is an effort that is going to be important for all of us to be engaged in. We are going to look for broad and deep contributions, not only across the U.S. government, but also from other sectors, from NGOs, from think tanks, from the private sector and also from our allies and international partners abroad. So I am very much looking forward to our question and answer period, so that I can get some of your good ideas and thoughts on the way forward.

But let me start by giving you a sense of how we went about this review, how we developed a new strategic approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan. After more than seven years of war and thousands of troops on the ground, with security conditions getting worse, not better, we decided in the review to go back to first principles, to be very disciplined and deliberative in our review and refocus on the fundamental national-security interests we have at stake.

We determine to take a fresh look at three very basic questions: First, why are we fighting in Afghanistan and trying to support and trying to support and stabilize Pakistan? What are our goals and how do those goals relate to our fundamental national interests? Second, what is at stake if we fail? What is at stake if we fail to achieve our goals? And third, what has been working and we should continue to build upon and what has not been working and needs to change?

In answering these questions, we consulted widely and deeply with partners, not only here within the U.S. government – this was truly an interagency led by the NSC and the three co-chairs – but also with nongovernmental experts here, in Afghanistan, in Pakistan and with our allies. We had deep consultations with Afghan and Pakistani government officials. We had a series of bilateral engagements, both here and there, and some trilateral engagements bringing them together, along with other regional actors.

We wanted to hear, up-front, real concerns, and factor – and aspirations – and factor those into our strategy work. We didn't want consultation just to be at the end, to sort of socialize what we came up with; we wanted it to inform and shape what we came up with.

So let me take each of those three back-to-basics questions, if you will, and highlight some of the key conclusions from our strategy review, starting with the first question: Why are we there, what are our goals? During the strategy-review process, we really came to refocus on a

very core and fundamental set of goals, and that is to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda and its extremist allies and to ensure that they cannot return to Afghanistan or continue to stay in Pakistan as safe havens where they can train and stage terrorist attacks.

We must never forget why we have troops in Afghanistan, and that is, to most – most fundamentally, to stop al Qaeda and its extremist allies and to deny them safe haven, and for the same reason, we must do everything we can to foster stability in Pakistan and to help them build their capacity to both combat terrorism and counter – and to counterinsurgency.

And this gets us to, then, the second basic question: What's at stake if we fail? How important is it that we actually stick with this and achieve these goals? After all, we all know that there are certainly no shortage of problems in the world, and the United States can't and shouldn't try to solve all of them. But the challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan are ones we simply cannot afford to ignore. If we fail to achieve our goals here, if al Qaeda and its associated violent extremist organizations regroup and gain additional power, it's not just Afghans and Pakistanis who will suffer. We will all be at risk.

Nine-eleven (9/11), the bombings in London, Madrid, Islamabad, Mumbai – we've all learned painfully that our – in our globalized world, we simply cannot choose to ignore the growth and professionalization of violent extremist groups, and in a nuclear Pakistan, the stakes are as high as they can get. Countering al Qaeda and its affiliated groups and preventing catastrophic instability in a nuclear-armed state are absolutely critical, crucial, to our security and to international security. And that's why we really can't turn our backs on this important region.

So turning to the third basic question, given our important goals, what have we been doing right and what have we been doing wrong, or at least what – where do we need improvement? And as I said, we consulted very widely on these questions during the review, because we wanted to get honest, unvarnished feedback.

So let me start with some of the good news. There is no doubt that our troops and our commanders on the ground in Afghanistan have been doing a fabulous job making a little go a long way. Moreover, both our troops and our civilian experts are generally appreciated and valued by the Afghan people. Despite Afghanistan's many difficulties, despite some serious setbacks, most Afghans remain eager to work with the coalition, to help us when we need help and to accept our help where we can provide it.

And still more good news: When we do work closely with our allies and coordinate with credible stakeholders in Afghanistan and Pakistan, it's clear that we can actually accomplish a great deal. We can protect civilian populations, reduce al Qaeda's ability to operate and help ensure stability and reconstruction. That's the good news.

There's also some more difficult news. For instance, as I said a moment ago, our commanders and troops have been very adept in recent years at turning less into more, and that's – that is good news. The bad news is that until recently, they have – they haven't had a choice in this matter. It's painfully clear that for several years, our effort on the ground has not been

adequately resourced to defeat the insurgency and address the fundamental conditions that enable – have enabled it to fester.

Our troops can do astonishing things with even minimal resources, but they can't do magic. If we're serious about this mission, and we are, we need to give our people on the ground, military and civilian, the resources they need to succeed in this mission. And that goes for, as I said, everyone – not just the military, but the civilian; not just Americans, but the international coalition.

Some other bad news that we heard in the course of the review is that we've – we were still stove-piping, meaning that despite our recognition that our task in Afghanistan is inextricably bound up with events in Pakistan, we were still thinking of these in two – as two separate countries, presenting entirely separate challenges. If we want to succeed, we need to think of Afghanistan and Pakistan fundamentally as a single theater, where both problems and progress are inextricably linked.

Specifically, we need to understand the intricate interactions of security, politics and economics along the porous and dangerous border between the two countries. I know that in this forum, I am very much preaching to the choir, and so I appreciate that position, but instability in Pakistan threatens our efforts in Afghanistan; failure in Afghanistan would increase the risk of failure in Pakistan, and recognizing this interaction must be central to every dimension of our strategy.

Just as events in Afghanistan and Pakistan are connected, both countries are products of their broader regional engagement, and events in either country can profoundly affect the security and stability of the entire region. And so in the past, I don't think our strategy has fully taken these regional dimensions into account. Going forward, we need to change that, we need to make regional issues central and not peripheral to our efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. And that will require constant regional diplomacy.

It's one of the reasons why the president and secretary of state appointed Richard Holbrooke as the special representative for the region, and you will see him constantly shuttling not only between Afghanistan and Pakistan but to every regional stakeholder and beyond to try to affect conditions on the ground and create the basis for success.

So I've told you a little bit about the process that we went through in our review and how we framed the questions, and I want to now highlight – and I've highlighted some of the key insights. That was very much the easy part. The really hard part is now the phase we're in, and that is taking our strategy and developing a sound implementation plan – a plan that is concrete and detailed, with metrics that we can use to evaluate progress, a plan that is also flexible enough to adapt to circumstances as they change.

So we have a very tough job ahead of us. Let me run through some of the more specific objectives that we have set for ourselves as we develop our plans. I don't have time to go into all the detail I'd like to, but at least we can set the table, if you will, for more rich discussion in the question-and-answer period.

So let's start with Afghanistan. I think the core element of our strategy is that we believe we need to fully resource an integrated, civil-military counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, one that is designed to do three key things: first, reverse Taliban gains and protect the population in the most troubled parts of the country particularly in the south and in the east; second, to provide the Afghan national-security forces with army and police with the training and mentoring they need to expand rapidly and ultimately take the lead in providing security for the Afghan people and the Afghan nation; third, create and maintain the secure environment in which governance and development can finally take root and grow.

So the obvious question is, how do we do that? We need to focus first and foremost on increasing Afghan capacity, starting with the Afghan national-security forces. That is going to be key to creating the kind of secure environment for other efforts in the development and governance domain to proceed. It's also critical to enabling the eventual transition of responsibility from coalition forces to Afghan forces, to put Afghans in the lead, which is certainly not only our goal, but it's the goal of the Afghan people and their leadership.

We must meet the requirements set by commanders on the ground for trainers. That has been a real long pull in the tent. And we should ensure that U.S. units deploying to Afghanistan are clearly given the mission of not only securing the population, which is sort of the heart of any counterinsurgency approach, but also partnering with local Afghan units to build their capacity. To that end, President Obama has already ordered more than 17,000 additional troops which will have this dual roll, as well as putting another 4,000 trainers on the ground to address a longstanding deficit in trainers for the Afghan forces.

Beyond the military mission, strengthening our civilian assistance and better integrating that civilian effort with the military side of the house will be critical to success. We plan to significantly increase our civilian expertise and resources, both U.S. and international, in Afghanistan to promote governance and development programs and to build Afghan capacity in the civilian sectors. That will involve not only drawing on U.S. government resources, which are too few, but also from the private sector, from think-tanks, from NGOs. So at the end of the session, if I have any volunteers, I will be taking names at the back. But this would be – this is a wonderful to serve – to serve your country, and we are looking for talent wherever we can find it.

Working with the U.N. and our allies, we will also be seeking to improve coordination and coherence in our efforts to support Afghan national-development priorities. Obviously, securing free and fair elections where – that's going to be the most immediate and consequential task, but our plans extend far beyond that in the realm of building governance over time.

We will be complementing our capacity-building efforts at the national level with a slightly – a bit of a shift in approach towards a more bottom-up set of efforts that also try to build capacity at the district level, where most Afghans have their most direct experience with government, and at the provincial level. We believe that this – these will be important complements to the efforts that we are taking to build capacity in national ministries.

But defeating the Taliban-led insurgency, which is really a complex syndicate of groups, is going to require additional steps as well. First is to break the link between the narcotics industry and the insurgency via a more effective counter-narcotics strategy that goes beyond eradication, which can play an important role, to also address alternative livelihoods, crop substitution and so forth, denying the insurgency critical sources of funding from the narcotics industry. Developing, as I said, alternative livelihoods, especially – this is especially important in a country where so much of the population, more than 80 percent, is so fundamentally dependent on the agricultural sector for its livelihood.

To defeat the insurgency, we will also eventually, as the tide turns, support Afghan-led reconciliation efforts. That is, to try to flip the foot soldiers, if you will, to drain off potential recruits, take them out of play with regard to the Taliban, to bring reconcilables back to the side of the Afghan people and the Afghan government. And finally, we will have to reenergize our efforts to combat corruption at all levels. The heart of any counterinsurgency strategy is reestablishing the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people. Countering corruption at all levels of the Afghan government will be absolutely essential if we are ultimately going to succeed.

Let me turn and say a few words about Pakistan and the challenges there, because they are very great. Pakistan has been both a victim of terrorism and a safe haven for terrorists for too long. Pakistani democracy needs our support, and we share an enemy. The killing of Benazir Bhutto, the bombings of Pakistani cities, the killing of police recruits the other day – all of this make this abundantly clear, and most Pakistanis feel a very shared set of both vulnerability and threat.

We have to confront the threat together in order to succeed against al Qaeda and other violent groups that strike the Pakistan-Afghanistan region and have – and many of which have the potential to also strike us. Building Pakistani counterinsurgency and counterterrorism capabilities is key so that Pakistan's legitimate government can more effectively combat militants at home.

But in Pakistan as in Afghanistan, we certainly cannot succeed through military means alone. We have to help the population on the border region make the area more inhospitable to extremists. We need to provide meaningful alternatives to supporting militants, and that means, as in Afghanistan, strong and well-resourced support for development, rule of law and governance programs from the bottom up.

It also means significant civilian investment from us and from our allies. That's absolutely vital to strengthening Pakistan's institutions so that they can, over time, provide security and opportunity to ordinary Pakistanis throughout the country. We will seek to – some new tools to focus our assistance to Pakistan on these common aims. Better counterinsurgency capabilities, both equipment and training for the armed forces, and increased civilian assistance through the Kerry-Lugar legislation, which President Obama has endorsed, to provide Pakistan with \$1.5 billion annually over the course of five years.

As with all of our programs worldwide, we will continue to evaluate the impacts and the performance of this aid, holding both ourselves and our Pakistani partners accountable for making progress towards our shared goals.

Let me say a word about where – where do we go from here. With these objectives in mind, we're now shifting, as I said, from the very hard work of developing concrete plans to achieving these ends. As we recommit ourselves to our efforts against terrorism and extremism in this critical part of the world, we're working to develop a very robust civil-military plan of action, one that can bring the economic, political, humanitarian and security capabilities to bear in a coordinated way.

Fine-tuning our plans to implement our broader strategy requires mobilizing not only domestic support but also greater international political support for our efforts. And again, you've seen since the review's conclusion the administration fanning out to NATO, to the Hague for a donor's conference, to the EU, now to the region, to China, to the Middle East and beyond, where we're seeking to ask each of our partners to do what they can to join with us in turning this around and reaching our common – our common goals.

It also means doing everything that we can to shore up a capable U.N. in Afghanistan and in the region. The U.N. is going to play a critical leadership and coordinating role on the assistance side, and we need to do everything in our power to help make them successful. It also means, as I said before, finding innovative ways to engage Pakistan and Afghanistan's neighbors and other regional stakeholders, to reestablish with them the notion of shared interest and to identify ways that they can help contribute towards preventing these states from remaining terrorist's safe havens over time.

Building robust support for both Afghanistan and Pakistan was part of the president's agenda in his recent travels. It will continue to be the agenda of both Richard Holbrooke and General Petraeus and others throughout the U.S. government. This is not – as I said at the very start, this is the beginning of the process, not the end. I also want to say that it's important that we recognize, this is not just the United States' effort or the America's War, as some have said. It is that, but it's also that of the international community. Defeating al Qaeda, its extremist allies, is a goal and a responsibility that all of us share.

We also know that as we go forward with implementing this strategy, we have to develop ways to measure progress and to hold ourselves and our partners accountable. The president, the Congress and the American people need to be able to tell whether or not we're succeeding. We are right now in the process, in the interagency, of identifying detailed metrics that we will use to evaluate our progress over time. But we want to make sure that these indicators tell the real story, that we actually get at whether our efforts are having their intended effect. It's always tempting to turn efforts to ensure accountability into number – a numbers and timelines game, and we've tried to learn some lessons from the recent past in that regard, and we're going to try to avoid going down that road.

But we will be monitoring and evaluating data and our performance in a whole host of areas, from the capabilities of the Afghan national-security forces to the performance of the

Pakistan security forces to our own commitment of military and civilian personnel and the results of their efforts. We will be continuing to evaluate how we're doing and adjust – making adjustments over time.

So let me conclude by saying that we have our work cut out for us. As a nation, however, our greatest strength is the incredible talent and dedication that we can bring to the table when we mobilize ourselves towards a common objective. And that comes not only from the military, which is perhaps the most visible form of our commitment, but also from the civilians who deploy and from experts outside of government. And so here at CSIS, I know that there is no shortage of talent and dedication, and we will certainly, as we go in this process, be calling on you to offer us your creativity, your energy, your ideas and, frankly, to keep us accountable and keep us focused on reaching successful outcomes.

The challenges ahead of us in Afghanistan and Pakistan are enormous. We do not have rose-colored glasses on. We know how challenging and difficult this is going to be. But we also know that we cannot afford to fail. This is absolutely critical, and we not only need to pull together as a government but as a nation to achieve our objectives, because the stakes are very, very high.

With a new strategy, greater resources and a renewed commitment in your support, however, I feel confident that we can get there. So thank you very much and I look forward to your questions.

(Applause.)

MR. BARTON: Thanks, Michèle. I can see that a number of people are already warming up their questions, but before you all raise your hands, maybe if I could just ask you a couple of questions that I think might be helpful to orient the room a bit. How many people here in the room have been in Pakistan and/or Afghanistan in the last few years, just as a – for curiosity's sake? (Laughter.) Okay.

MS. FLOURNOY: Now I have a question. How many of you would like to go back? (Laughter.) And I will be leaving my e-mail with Rick so that we can be in touch.

MR. BARTON: So I think, Michèle, I can – I think because we have so many questions, I think if you're comfortable with it, we should probably do three or four at a time, because we're never going to get through this group otherwise, and we'll just sort of do a sweep of the room, front-back, and if you really could make your point very quickly. I saw Wendy's hand first, and then I'll move this way, but please wait for the microphone and identify your affiliation as well as your name, if you would.

And then I'll go – and then I'll come over here, and I'm sure there will be some press questions. We'll mix them up. But our first question's right here, if we can get down to this, start here, and then – where's our other microphone, just for – okay. So why don't you move down towards the front and I'll get somebody there in your neighborhood right – maybe right next to you there? Then we'll go to the second question, thanks.

Q: Thank you very much for a very cogent presentation and let me just say, I'm Wendy Chamberlain from the Middle East Institute and let me just say on behalf of all of us that care very deeply about this subject that you've done, you've really nailed the problems and we appreciate the analysis. My question is on two weak links in the analysis, two weak institutions that you'll have to depend a great deal on in the Af-Pak strategy.

One is the Pakistan army who still, to many of us, we fear is in denial that we do share a common enemy, as you said. And the second institution is right here in Washington; so much of the strategy is dependent upon civilian development and as Rick Barton and I know, there's a lot of work that still needs to be done to re-engineer and revitalize USAID. And I haven't been hearing much commentary on those two institutions, thank you.

Q: Anne Richard, International Rescue Committee. Thank you very much, Michèle, for putting such a spotlight back on South Asia. I think this is overdue and I'm really pleased that you and colleagues are really focusing attention on this and of course, as you know, I'm very pleased to hear you say all these things about the need to improve civilian resources.

One concern I have is, even if you send all the talented people in this room, especially a couple of people over there – (laughter) – back to South Asia, you know, what we really need are Afghans working on behalf of their own country. So shouldn't we send maybe less American experts and build the capacity of more Afghan experts and non-governmental organizations like mine? I think we have a really good story about that, so that's partly why I'm asking the question.

Q: Hi, thank you so much for being here and sharing this story with us. My name is Jawal Joya (ph), an independent policy analyst. My question to you is about the long term in terms of 10, 15 years. You know, it's good to have the army and you know the national security forces and all that but if you do not have the funding that comes from – for Afghan state, then you know, everything is going to be so meaningless.

And you know when I look at the strategy in Afghanistan, I see a lot of spending but very little investment that's going to give return in terms of, you know, revenue for the government in terms of creating jobs for the people so that the government can tax, like in terms of income tax and so on and so forth. So what is being done to ensure that the Afghan government, in 10 years, is going to be able to pay for its soldiers and so on, and what is also being done about putting together economic skeletons so there is a political economy in place?

One reason that, you know, \$60 billion has been spent there but you cannot go and find \$1 billion worth of investment in Afghanistan: It's because it doesn't have a political economy, a skeleton that holds things together. And what you guys are doing about that?

MS. FLOURNOY: I think that – (chuckles) – that may be enough for me to try to take this on. (Laughter.) I do think that we need to work with various Af – sorry Pakistani institutions, including but not limited to the armed forces to shift their calculus, their strategic calculus if you will. And I think actually when you talk to a number of people one-on-one, I

think that process is happening, especially as the attacks have come further into Pakistan out of the sort of border areas but into the heart of the Pakistani society. I think there is growing recognition of the very real threat that some of these extremist groups pose to Pakistani society and Pakistani stability.

I also think part of the equation is trying to help lower their concerns about other potential threats in the region and hence the regional approach that we've got to lower tensions in other areas so that there is greater confidence and security to turn attention to the threat from within. But you know, so I think this is a work in progress; there are many cases of very close cooperation in combating these groups together and there are areas where we need further improvement.

I think part of this is getting out of – getting to a more strategic level of partnership and a more consistent and significant level of assistance, not just monetary, but in terms of training and advising and working hand-in-glove across the board. On our own civilian capacity, this is something that you all who know me know that I've been tilting at this windmill for a while. I do think that the urgency that's felt at the senior levels of this administration will result in some increase in investment in our own capacity to deploy civilian expertise abroad.

But because we didn't begin that two years ago, five years ago, 10 years ago or back in the day, when it first came to light in places like Somalia and Haiti and the Balkans, we're going to be playing a game of catch-up. And so we are going to be looking beyond the government resources, we're going to be looking to our reserve components where we can tap individuals based on their civilian skill set. We're going to be looking to a whole host of stopgap measures until we can generate that additional capacity which we are finally starting to budget for.

On the issue in that you raised about Afghans, I think building Afghan capacity, bringing Afghan expertise back into the country is absolutely critical to success in the long term. I think one of the things we are trying to do, for example, in our contracting rules – in guidelines for our work with NGOs – is to basically push this idea of a vast majority being Afghan as opposed to bringing people in from the outside. If you look at the statistics, that's already very much – we're already moving in that direction, even, you know, in terms of this situation over the past couple of years, and we're going to push that even farther.

Because ultimately this is about, as you said, building Afghan capacity. In terms of the longer term economic development question, you're absolutely right; one of the things we have to get to is a point of sustainability, but it's going to take some time to get there. I think in the short to medium term the international community is going to continue to have to support many of the capacity-building efforts.

But one of the things we're starting to do as parts of the country become more secure and we hope to make further progress, as I said, in the South and the East in the next period of time, we want to start getting beyond immediate assistance to real economic development. I'll give you one example: We recently had the U.S. Geological Survey come in – not we, the former administration did actually – and it surveyed the natural resources of this country.

Afghanistan actually has a great deal of potential in terms of strategic minerals and so forth. Looking at systems for taxes and tolls – you know, border crossings, eventually a tax system – those are all longer-term systemic elements that need to be designed and put into place if, as you suggest, we're going to get Afghanistan to a point of self-sustainability.

I think that's going to be a mid to long term goal; it's not going to happen overnight, but I am heartened by the fact that people are thinking about that as we plan our efforts. That is very much a part of, you know, people are aware of that, they're thinking about how best to go about that.

MR. BARTON: Let's go back to – let's go to the back here – and either of those gentlemen – only one of them.

(Laughter.)

Q: I'm Howard Mehdi (ph) and along with Pakistan, I came back from Afghanistan just last month. I work for FPACS (ph), but it is not the government FPACS, it is a private information service. I have two questions, one is about FATA and the other about region. In FATA, it is observed that there is a big gap of local partnership within the FATA people. Same time we do know about several groups, those that take up arms against Taliban or so-called al-Qaeda, which includes Turi tribes in Orakzai Agency, Salarzai and Bajaur Agency, Bittani Tribe, a section of Bittani tribe in South Waziristan and other section of tribe of South Waziristan in Mehsud areas.

So is there any plan to tap in these groups on the side of, in fact, positive forces, because we know about the serious gap of trust between the Pakistan administration, or you can say Pakistan army, and between these groups? My second question is about the regional scene where it is observed time and again that Pakistani army is in denial, but why they are in denial? My understanding is that this is insecurity coming from the Indian involvement on Afghan theater. So there are complaints and now it is somehow proved by neutral sources that Indians are intervening on the Pakistani side, but I think given the history of Pakistan-India relations, Pakistani army might not help you the way you want if Indian supremacy is established.

MR. BARTON: Thank you, why don't we take the woman in the way back here and then we'll take somebody here in middle if Justin, you can go – maybe the woman in the middle, here?

Q: Hi, hello, Patricia – (inaudible, off mike) – it is on – okay is that better?

MR. BARTON: Once you start talking it goes on.

Q: Oh okay, good, okay. It was really interesting talk and I really want to support the administration's plans, but I guess I have to question one of your central tenants, which is putting Pakistan and Afghanistan together. The Pakistanis really resented when we used to talk about India and Pakistan in the same sentence and it seems to me that we're doing it again and my understanding about Pakistan is that they like the Afghans about as much as they like the

Indians. And I don't understand how we are increasing our trust, or changing our trust deficit with the Pakistanis with that kind of particularly civilian-based set of assumptions. Thanks so much.

MR. BARTON: Thank you, why don't we try this woman here, and this will be the second round – last question of the second round.

Q: You mentioned that at some point the administration would support Afghan-led reconciliation talks. Given that those talks have begun, do you know when that point is, and how far you're willing to go with it? For example, if a U.S. representative was requested, would you attend a session with Mullah Omar?

MR. BARTON: Could you identify yourself?

Q: Oh I'm sorry, Ann Garrin (ph) with the Associated Press.

MS. FLOURNOY: Okay, let me start with the issues of supporting local groups that want to reject extremism and violent extremism in particular. I think tribal engagement is very much a part of the strategy that we want to employ in the FATA in particular but also in parts of Afghanistan. One of the things we're sorting through right now are the particular mechanisms that are available either direct, but often indirect, to do that.

We've had some limited but very promising success in that area, where certain groups have basically taken their territory out of play for the Taliban or affiliated groups. And we want to encourage and build on some of those initial successes. So that is very much something we're looking at, in terms of how we actually do that. On the Afghan side, we've also started one of these bottom-up initiatives on focused district development where we're picking certain districts and really focusing all kinds of resources to build capacity from the bottom up, developing local security forces that are drawn from the local population, responsive to the ANSF, but are very much of the local area sort of doing neighborhood watch functions and basic security functions.

And that seems – have a pilot program going on in Wardak, we're just starting it next door – that seems to something positive to build on, coupled with focused economic development assistance in those areas as well. So I think that is – you've hit on something that's very important and we're now working through the details of how do you operationalize that insight, on a larger, on a larger scale.

On the regional dimensions, I think that, you know, you touched on a very deep and historic distrust between Pakistan and India and I think that the only way that you're going to give the Pakistani government and armed forces the confidence to shift their focus is to address some of those areas of tension, to try to reduce tension between the countries to develop confidence-building measures to allow the sort of breathing space that would allow the folks on the Pakistani side to turn their attention to some of the internal challenges they face.

On the question of treating Afghanistan and Pakistan together, I agree. You know, it's possible to take this too far, and I want to be very clear that we recognize the unique attributes of

both countries. They are, in many ways, different societies with different challenges, different opportunities and so forth. What we're trying to get at by looking at them as the single theater is to really get our arms around the degree to which and the ways in which they interrelate and affect one another and make sure that we're capturing those in our strategy. And so I want to make sure we're putting that in context.

And lastly, to the question on reconciliation, I think that the truth is, if experience in Iraq and other places is any guide, I think that reconciliation efforts, again starting at the bottom with, sort of, flipping the foot soldiers, if you will, those will most likely start to get traction once the tables turn, once the momentum has shifted. It's very hard to interest people in reconciliation when they think their cause is winning. You have to fundamentally change the conditions, change the dynamics, change the momentum to create the conditions where any kind of bottom-up reconciliation is going to get traction.

I think this is, as I said, going to be an Afghan-led effort. Ultimately, it's the Afghan people and the Afghan government who have to decide who is reconcilable and who is not. That is their judgment, not ours. But I think it's going to take some time to shift the security momentum for us to really start getting traction there beyond, you know, small numbers of people to large groups of people wanting to come in from the cold, if you will.

MR. BARTON: Let's get a couple of underserved neighborhoods – maybe the press back here. (Laughter.) And then we'll get – if there's a question in this group and a question in this group over here. Yes?

Q: Thank you. Mary Louise Kelly with NPR. I wonder if I could press you a little bit on benchmarks. You mentioned that they're a work in progress, but are there any that you can share with us that are so blindingly obvious that perhaps they're clearly going to be on the table? Do you have any deadline that you're working toward in terms of establishing the benchmarks, because as you know, there are lawmakers on Capitol Hill who are very concerned that these have not yet been announced, and wonder how progress is being measured for the new strategy without some sort of metrics in place now?

MS. FLOURNOY: Mm-hmm. Um –

MR. BARTON: Let me just take that one, here.

MS. FLOURNOY: Oh, sure. Yes.

MR. BARTON: Yeah, why don't we go two more? Let's get this gentleman here, right in front of you, if you would. Yes, thanks.

Q: Thank you. I'm Alan Kronstadt from the Congressional Research Service. Madame, in your remarks, you mentioned maybe a bright point in that U.S. economic development efforts and military efforts are being appreciated by the Afghan people. Be that as it may, we have a somewhat different situation in neighboring Pakistan. There's six or seven times as many people in Pakistan. There are nuclear weapons in Pakistan. By many accounts, Pakistan is a primary

source of Islamist extremism – extremists with international, even global, aspirations. In Pakistan, the view of the U.S. role in the region is perhaps hugely unfavorable, unpopular; how is the administration planning to deal with that circumstance?

MR. BARTON: And then maybe this gentleman right here in the middle of that group.

Q: Thank you. I'm Michael McCloutchek (sp) with the Center for Complex Operations at National Defense University. Thank you for your remarks, Madame. My question is, I don't think I heard you use the word democracy in reference to Afghanistan; can we accomplish our core goals in Afghanistan without some kind of robust American democracy support program, and what do you think are the prospects for democracy – the viability of democracy – in Afghanistan? Thank you.

MR. BARTON: Thanks.

MS. FLOURNOY: Okay, just a few easy questions. (Laughter.) Let me start with the question about benchmarks. We're actually going to be – given the loaded nature of that term in past history, we're going to try to call it something else, like measures or performance. But we are hard at work, interagency; we hope, within the next week or two, to be able to share our preliminary thoughts on what the appropriate metrics are, starting with our friends on the Hill. I think there's – as we ask Congress to appropriate funds in support of the strategy, it's only fair that we discuss with them the kinds of metrics they can use and we will use to hold ourselves accountable.

I don't want to get out ahead of the administration to say what those will be, but I can assure you we're trying to focus on – to not be exhaustive, but to sort of identify the elements that are most important to success, to measure output, not just input or level of effort, and in particular, to focus on areas of Afghan capacity. Again, if you come back to what is ultimately going to determine the difference between success or failure, it is building Afghan capacity in various areas. So I'll leave it there.

In Pakistan, their, certainly, public opinion towards the United States is very different. There's a history to that. I think we have our own trust deficit to overcome with Pakistan. I think the way we deal with that is to re-engage strategically with them to go back, again, back to first principles, to identify areas where we have shared interests, to get our relationship out of a sort of transactional mode to a level of strategic partnership, to invest in that country at a meaningful level over a sustained period with measures of accountability. These are – we need a fundamental shift in this relationship for things to work, and that's obviously going to take time. It's going to take sustained efforts. And frankly, we have some work to do here to convince our own stakeholders that this can and should be done.

On democracy, I think everyone supports the democratic aspirations of the Afghan people. No one is walking away from that. I think what you see in this strategy is a focus on a narrower set of near-term goals to sort of turn the immediate situation around. I actually think that while, you know, the precursors for our version of Jeffersonian democracy may not be

readily present, there are a lot of traditions in Afghanistan that look pretty democratic when you examine them closely. And so I do think there's a lot to build on there.

That is going to be a very long-term process that will far exceed the period of extraordinary military intervention. I mean, the economic and political development in Afghanistan is going to be a generations-long project. I would certainly hope that we could continue to be supportive in that long arc of time beyond any period of, as I said, an extra – even after Afghans have the capacity to secure themselves and to proceed.

MR. BARTON: Still a few questions. I hope you realize we're not going to get to all of them. Why don't we – let's get one of these two gentlemen here on the left, if you would. Make your choice – whichever one you choose is going to be the winner. And then we'll come back to the middle here. Justine, why don't you just pick a winner right now?

Q: Thank you very much for your talk today. It was very informative. My name is Steve Arnold, U.S. Army retired, and now one of those bloodsucking contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq. (Laughter.) One of the things you mentioned was the poppy crop, and you talked about eradication and alternatives. And I've even heard some talk about buying the crop for medicinal purposes. Have you come up with something concrete on the way forward on what to do about the poppies? It's a big problem now.

MR. BARTON: Thank you for the honest self-description. (Laughter.)

MS. FLOURNOY: Just for the record, General Arnold is one of the people who helped to both lead operations in Somalia and understand the importance of the lessons we should learn from that experience. So I just want to commend you for that, sir.

MR. BARTON: Thanks, Michèle, for setting me straight as well.

Q: I was an NGO worker in Iran prior to the shah's overthrow and I see some frightening parallels. If you go to Pakistan today, which I do frequently, the upper layer of educated people – very articulate, very much identify with our goals. They realize this is an attack on their very existential system. But below that, you have this huge gap in the village where I also go in Pakistan, where they don't see that at all. They don't – they feel totally neglected by this layer at the top and by their government – they don't trust them.

They're susceptible to the narrative that the Taliban is pushing, that this is really America's war and you're asking us at the village level, where we don't get schools, we don't get education, we don't get this and we don't get that and we get nothing, to put our lives on the line to take on these people to protect America. That's a very hard sell. We need to figure a way to get down below that second layer so we don't have the Iran scenario where you play with the top layer that loves us and then is swept away.

MR. BARTON: Thanks, Jim. Why don't we get – let's get one of these people in the front row over here.

Q: I'm Shuja Nawas from the Atlantic Council. I have a question picking up on Jim's point, which is a cause of great unhappiness in the United States, in the military in Pakistan and in civil society, and that is the scheme of reimbursement for the military. You already defined this as America's war. That's the way it's seen when you have a reimbursement scheme, rather than one based on military aid with indicators of success that have been mutually agreed to. Is there any thinking about changing this scheme?

MS. FLOURNOY: Okay. Let me start with the counter-narcotics effort. Again, this has got to be a key part of a long-term strategy. I think that what we're in the process of doing right now is coming up with a more nuanced and integrated strategy that deals not only with the immediate challenges of trying to avoid, you know, current crops getting to market, but the more fundamental challenges of shifting a whole sector of the economy off of an illicit crop and onto licit crops that can actually benefit the Afghan people and create opportunities for trade and economic development and so forth.

So I think there's got to be, obviously, a crop-substitution part of this; there has to be a training and education and incentives part of this; there has to be a more holistic approach that says once you get a farmer invested in a new crop, how is that farmer going to get that crop to market, how is he going to move it on a road, how is he going to keep it refrigerated if it needs refrigeration, how is he going to function. So you have to take a very holistic approach to creating viable alternatives to poppy and you have to increase the costs of growing poppy.

You know, there are a lot of areas where this intersects very closely with the security situation. And you have farmers who might be very open to switching to another crop even if it wasn't quite as profitable, but they are intimidated and they are threatened if they were to do so. So the security becomes a key foundation to enabling this transformation of the agriculture sector to happen. On the addressing the local population in Pakistan, I think this is one of the toughest issues that we are wrestling with. We absolutely agree with you that we have got to get assistance to the Pakistani population in a way that is – that they can feel and touch and directly benefit from.

That is what we're after in the Kerry-Lugar legislation. It's education, it's health care and so forth. The thing we are struggling with, which I think everybody struggles with, is getting the delivery mechanisms in place. How do we do that in areas that are very cut off from the government or very distrustful of the government? And so I think we are working hard with that; we're trying to engage our friends in the NGO community to figure out how do we do that. But we're also trying to work with the Pakistani government to help them be more effective in meeting the basic needs of their own population. At the end of the day, that is the name of the game in turning that situation around.

So on the reimbursement scheme, I know that this is a – there are lots of trials and tribulations associated with this. I don't think it's an either/or. I think when our Pakistani partners conduct operations with us, they – we do want to try to defray the costs of those operations to support them in their counterinsurgency and counterterrorism efforts, so I don't think we want to get rid of reimbursement. But we want to make that process less painful and less bureaucratic and make it work better for both sides.

We have to meet our certain accountability standards on our side that Congress puts into place, but I think we can – we are sending a team – we recently sent a team over to try to figure out how do we make this work, given the governmental requirements on the Pakistan side as well. But I do think the most important thing is we need to substantially increase our military assistance and broaden the form. I think that, you know, one of the things that the American military has learned at great cost in the last years is a lot about counterinsurgency. We've learned some very hard lessons and we have paid for them dearly.

We are very interested in finding ways to work with our Pakistani friends, who also have very painful experience, who've also paid a great deal – a very high price – and who also have ideas to bring to the table. But if we could get beyond a transactional, sort of equipping, support, reimbursement relationship to a strategic relationship where we are also training, advising, working together on the ground, sharing intelligence, sharing operations, I think we would be much more effective and get a lot farther down the road of achieving our common objectives.

MR. BARTON: We have time for at least one more round here. Where are the microphone people? Okay, do you see someone close by? (Laughter.) Why don't we do that, and then let's go – then just pick somebody out over there, if you would, and – thanks.

Q: My name is Daisaku Higashi, a Japanese Ph.D. candidate at University of British Columbia in Canada. I conducted a two-month research in Afghanistan. I interviewed many ministers of the Afghan government, but also collected 300 opinions out in Kandahar about – (inaudible). I published the report from the department peacekeeping operational's U.N. headquarters, and also, I made a presentation to Japanese parliament members for the policy on Afghanistan.

And I emphasized that maybe 90 percent of insurgency is non-ideologically driven insurgency, so it may be possible to reconcile with those people if you can create a credible reconciliation process with economic incentives. For example, to create a lot of vocational centers which can give salary to the reconciled peoples all over the country. And if Japan, Canada or South Korea created those kind of reconciliation programs with economic incentives, what could be the response of the U.S. government on this kind of an effort? And I'm very encouraged by your new strategies, which clearly defines the strategy of reconciliation. Thank you.

MR. BARTON: Thank you very much. Who has the microphone over there? Yes?

Q: Yes, Chris DeAngelis from the U.S. Trade Representative's office. Ma'am, you mentioned a few times the Kerry-Lugar legislation and I also just wanted to point out that there's another piece of legislation out there. Senator Marie Cantwell and Chris Van Hollen have the Afghan-Pakistan Reconstruction Opportunity Zone legislation.

And that would address many of the things that these questions have raised, you know, long-term economic development – sustainable development – by providing trade benefits in these zones in Afghanistan and Pakistan targeted primarily along the border areas where there

are so many problems, giving opportunities to people that, where narco-terrorism and trafficking are about the only things that they have right now. So we're looking to move forward with this in the next month or two, and certainly welcome defense and other support behind it.

MS. FLOURNOY: If I could just say on that point, I should have mentioned that as well. It's another great example of the kinds of legislation that would be very helpful to make progress on the economic side.

Q: Thank you. At least I got the mike. The question that I have –

MR. BARTON: Tell us your name and where you're from.

Q: Yeah, Mees Hirsio (ph) from Tolo TV Afghanistan. The first question is, what concrete steps would the U.S. take in order to at least reduce civilian casualties in Afghanistan, somehow, that could build trust between Afghan and the Afghan, U.S.-backed government? And also what concerns the U.S. about ISI connections with insurgents and about the peace agreements done between the Pakistani government and the Taliban in Swat Valley? Thank you.

MS. FLOURNOY: Okay. Let me start with the question about reconciling elements that are non-ideologically driven. And I think, you know, when we started with an assessment of what are we dealing with here, you know, what we use the term Taliban for – there's no – it's a bumper sticker that belies a very complex syndicate of different groups and different people who are involved in this for different reasons.

And I agree with you that there is this – there are elements that are not ideologically committed that, if we provided them a secure environment and alternative livelihood, they would flip and leave the insurgency and be very, you know, contributing members to Afghan society. So we absolutely have to look at how we incentivize that shift. And again, as I think we make progress on the security front and we create some bottom-up economic activity, we'll hopefully see some examples that demonstrate the validity of your point.

On the civilian casualties, this is an issue that, when I was recently in Afghanistan, we spent a lot of time talking about. I think the U.S. military is deeply concerned about this, as is the Department of Defense. I think wherever they occur, we are deeply concerned about that. One of the things that's happened in recent weeks is a number of steps that we have worked out with the Afghan ministry of defense and the Afghan military to try to more fully integrate Afghans into every aspect of our operations, from intelligence to planning to actual execution, so that we have the benefit of Afghan expertise, knowledge, sensitivities, et cetera, in what we're doing. And that includes the most sensitive kinds of direct action that we are undertaking against extremist elements.

So we're working that problem very, very hard. I also think there is an informational dimension to this. We investigate every incident – every alleged incident. And when we've gone in, there are many situations where, when we've actually investigated, we've found that the casualties were not what they were said to be – that there had been a propaganda effort, developed by the Taliban, to inflame the situation, to make it worse. So we also – there's an

information problem, too, here, that sometimes only, you know, one – a propaganda effort gets out, but the actual reporting on what actually happened is not fully represented.

But again, I'm not denying that these things happen, and when they do happen, they're always regretted. And what we have done is to take a number of very concrete steps to try to prevent them from happening in the future by working hand-in-glove with our Afghan counterparts in every possible element of the planning and conduct of operations. With regard to the peace agreements in Swat, I mean, I think that, you know, I am personally very concerned about some of these efforts, because I think that ultimately, this is – these groups will take advantage of any lull, any reduction in pressure.

They are not reconcilables, for the most part. They are and I think they need to be dealt with in a consistent and concerted way. So I think this is something that I hope, ultimately, we will see – we will be able to help provide Pakistan with the support they need to actually address the problems in these areas over time. So I think this is an area that needs a lot of additional dialogue and attention from both of our countries.

MR. BARTON: Thank you, Michèle, very much. Thank you all for coming. Thank you. If you could stay in your seats for just a minute, that would be great. And again, thanks, Michèle.

(Applause.)

MS. FLOURNOY: Let me say thank you very much, and I'm serious about the offer for volunteers. Please get in touch with us. (Chuckles.)

(END)